



**USAID | MALAWI**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## USAID Funded MTPDS Program Monthly Newsletter

**Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support (MTPDS) program is a 3 year USAID funded project supporting the professional development of teachers in Malawi and implementation of the National Primary Curriculum. MTPDS is being implemented by Creative Associates International, RTI International and Seward, Inc, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology**

### EGRA National Coordination Committee Holds First Meeting



**Christine Djondo, USAID Education Team Leader makes opening remarks with (left to right) Aabira Sher Afgan (USAID) Chrissy Soko (DIAS), Stephen Harvey (MTPDS)**

in collaboration with the **USAID-funded MTPDS program**, with the objective of ensuring the institutionalisation of EGRA within Ministry structures

The meeting was opened by Ms. Chrissy Soko on behalf of the Director of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS). She underlined the importance of early reading as a determining factor of later performance and retention in school. USAID Education Team Leader, Ms. Christine Djondo, said USAID has embarked on a new global education strategy, the first goal of which is *improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015*. She placed the **USAID-funded MTPDS Program** at the heart of this effort in Malawi. By means of the project, USAID will reach all 5000 schools in Malawi by using Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The project will also scale up its intensive reading intervention from 2 to 7 districts in the country. The additional districts to participate in the intervention will be identified by the MoEST in the coming weeks.

Participants, who came from MoEST and its department, defined benchmarks and targets for the next 5 years aimed at improvement in learner performance on key skills tested by EGRA, including letter recognition, word recognition, reading fluency and comprehension. Recommendations were also generated for the content of CPD in the future which will encompass the 5 main early reading skills: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principles, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. There were also some lighter moments at the meeting, such as when Martha Myava of MTPDS demonstrated the intervention teaching methods. The strong representation of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) staff was also encouraging as their participation and cooperation is the means by which learning from EGRA into pre-service training as well as CPD can be achieved.

Mr. McKnight Kalanda, Director of Basic Education, in his closing remarks underlined the importance of EGRA in enhancing accountability within the education system and in diagnosing issues early enough in a learner's school career for remedial action to be taken.



**Closing remarks by the McKnight Kalanda, Director of Basic Education**



**EGRA Coordinating Committee Members drawn from a range of MoEST departments and institutions**

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- constituted EGRA national coordination committee takes place in Lilongwe

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**"Goal One in the USAID global education strategy is improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015," Christine Djondo, Team Leader for Education at USAID Malawi.**

## Continuous Professional Development Update



*Training of facilitators for Leadership 2 at Chankhanga TDC in Kasungu*

In October 2011, the CPD team at the **USAID-funded MTPDS program** finalized Leadership Module 3, whose content aims to strengthen CPD activities in schools. The need for this module emerged from CPD review sessions during Training of Facilitator for Leadership Module 2. These sessions revealed that many schools were able to establish CPD committees, with CPD mentors and CPD calendars in place. Most Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) reported training head teachers, CPD mentors and other stakeholders. However, many PEAs reported delays in getting CPD activities to take off in schools and clusters. Some reasons included weak leadership in schools and inadequate resources for monitoring. PEAs also reported that schools feel over-

whelmed due to too many interventions. Other setbacks included understaffing and lack of incentives at school level. Some schools reported that some teachers had a mistaken perception that CPD was for Standards 1-4 teachers only. Leadership training aims at equipping head-teachers with skills for establishing school-based CPD activities to cater for all teachers from Standards 1-8. Schools are expected to identify CPD needs for the whole school, and conduct CPDs in response to local needs. PEAs made the following recommendations regarding how they should support successful CPD implementation:

- Elect CPD mentors who have received prior CPD training
- Involve the whole school staff, including Standard 5-8 teachers
- PEAs should require CPD mentors to submit action plans at the beginning of each term, and to write monthly and term reports
- PEAs should identify content experts as resource persons for zones and districts
- PEAs should identify and nurture teacher talent to enhance self-esteem, to develop intrinsic self-motivation
- PEAs should publicize and share CPD success stories
- PEAs should form study circles where teachers read and discuss articles to stimulate new thinking and improved teaching and learning.
- PEAs should promote exchange visits between schools at cluster, zonal and district levels
- PEAs should hold open days or symposiums where teachers present their work, findings or innovative ideas to improve teaching
- DEMs' offices could set aside funds for carrying out CPD plans in schools and zones.

The practicalities of implementing each of these recommendations are explored in more detail in Leadership CPD module 3. Other topics to be explored include (i) promoting gender equity and (ii) promoting community involvement.

## Enumerators for EGRA 2011 trained at Mponela



*An enumerator being tested while assessing a learner*

The **USAID-funded MTPDS Program** is getting ready for a new round of nationwide data collection for EGRA in November 2011. To build the internal capacity of the MoEST and promote sustainability, for this round of data collection all enumerators will be MoEST officials—mainly PEAs and SEMAs.

From 19th to 25th October, the project trained 40 enumerators at Mponela. The training was observed by Ms. Aabira Sher Afgan (COTR MTPDS) and Dr. Sarah Wright from USAID. The USAID team underlined the importance of the operation and its relevance to current USAID priorities.

The training was practice-based and participants appreciated the new assessment skills that they acquired. At the end of the training most participants achieved over 90% on the inter-rater reliability test

(IRR), which is very high. That means all of them achieved the required standard to participate in data collection in the schools across the country.

The Assistant Director for Inspectorate and Advisory Services responsible for literacy and languages, Mrs Catherine Saiwa, appreciated the fact that **USAID-funded MTPDS Program** had decided to use and train MoEST officers for the next round of EGRA data collection and pledged MoEST's support for this program.



*Participants at the enumerator training exercise*



## Voices from the field: Laying the Foundations of Reading in Salima and Ntchisi



*Learners enjoy the Nditha Kuwerenga Reader*

Observations from the field clearly show that something very encouraging is happening in Salima and Ntchisi. Children are demonstrating the foundation skills of reading within the first term of standard 1. The foundations of reading are being constructed using 8 main building blocks.

1. **Time on task** - learning to read requires plenty of practice. All schools in the intervention have added an hour to the school day in standard 1 and devote that time to literacy.

2. **Reading material** – In all intervention schools standard 1 learners have been provided with readers and teachers are turning their classrooms into print rich environments.

3. **Structured lesson plans** – Teachers have been provided with structured lesson plans for early reading. Each lesson follows a logical pattern illustrated in the lesson cycle here.

4. **Continuous Professional Development**- Teachers have been provided with 6 days of CPD on 5 essential early reading skills: phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. They are given a day of coaching in implementing lesson plans provided.

5. **Assessment.** Teachers are trained to use simple continuous assessment techniques to assess progress. They only move forward once mastery has been achieved. Through regular assessment learners and parents receive regular feedback on progress

6. **School-based support** is provided by PEAs and the District Literacy Coordinator. They are able to model teaching methods and provide feedback to teachers.

7. **Enhanced Accountability.** District Officials, Head teachers and SMCs are monitoring and supporting the intervention.

8. **Community mobilization.** Parents are being mobilized to support their children, celebrate their achievements and monitor their progress.

The intervention builds upon international best practices, and an emerging consensus among USAID-funded projects regarding what makes an effective reading intervention. The **USAID-funded MTPDS Program** is laying the foundations for reading in Malawi.



*Children hungry to read at Chimbalanga Primary School*

## USAID funded MTPDS welcomes Demis Kunje



Demis Kunje, Senior M&E Systems Advisor

The **USAID-funded MTPDS** team has been strengthened by the arrival of the Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Advisor, Demis Kunje. Demis was previously working at Chancellor College's Center for Education Research and Training as Senior Research Fellow.

He has vast experience in educational research, monitoring and evaluating projects, data management, data analysis and report writing. He has published many articles on Malawian education in both national and international journals.

He has contributed to many national debates on teaching and to the production of various key national documents such as the National Strategy for Teacher Education and Development and the SACMEQ reports. He has also taught "Teacher Development in Developing Countries at Kobe University in Japan.

With this background Demis brings a wide spectrum of expertise in teacher data management to program evaluation. He will be an asset in driving the implementation of the PCAR M&E strategy.

## Events Calendar for November 2011

### ***Ongoing USAID funded MTPDS Program Activities***

#### **Teacher Education Policy Support**

- Supporting NSTED implementation

#### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- Dissemination of funds and training resources for both Literacy 2 and leadership 3 trainings.
- **Early Grade Reading Assessment**
- EGRA/EGMA data collection in 150 schools in 6 divisions

#### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

- Plan for printing of supplementary readers

#### **PCAR Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Finalize PCAR M&E Strategy document

### ***Planned Events under the USAID funded MTPDS Program***

#### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

- Weekends throughout December 2011: Leadership Module 3 Training of Trainers

#### **Early Grade Reading Assessment**

- 7-18 Nov: EGRA data collection in the schools

#### **Teaching and Learning Materials**

- Develop the specification and procurement plan and cost for the printing and distribution of Supplementary readers.

**Editor's Corner:** The USAID-funded MTPDS newsletter intends to provide insights on activities, achievements, and success stories from the field. We are inviting readers to send their comments, contributions and questions or tips for teacher professional development.

Please send your contributions to: The Editor, **USAID**-funded MTPDS Program, Area 10/612, Tsoka Road, Private Bag B481, Lilongwe. Tel: +265 1 794 977, Email: [mkachila@mtpds.rti.org](mailto:mkachila@mtpds.rti.org)  
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